

Seattle Light Rail Review Panel

Meeting Notes for December 6, 2000

Agenda Items

- Briefing on 38.5% Public Art Program Report
- Updates on Lander and Royal Brougham stations

Commissioners Present

Rick Sundberg, Chair
Carolyn Law
Jay Lazerwitz
Jack Mackie
Mimi Sheridan
Paul Tomita

Staff Present

Debora Ashland, Sound Transit
Marty Curry, Planning Commission
Barbara Goldstein, Arts Commission
Sue Kelly, CityDesign
Cheryl Sizov, CityDesign
John Walser, Sound Transit

Following introductions, Debora Ashland provided the Panel with an update on recent changes at Sound Transit, notably that light rail director Paul Bay has stepped down and been replaced by Tuck Wilson, who worked on the Portland MAX system. Staff is bringing new cost estimates and other information to the Board on December 14th. Although work has halted on the tunnel stations while discussion of costs and construction methods continue, design is proceeding for the south of downtown stations.

Briefing on the 38.5% Public Art Program Report

Dan Corson, Start
Nobi _____, Start
Norie Sato, Start
Tad Savinar, Start
Carol Valenta, Start

This is third in a series of documents leading to an art master plan. Based on the comments received at the conclusion of 30% design, we felt there was a need to prepare this "38.5%" report. This report is, as was the others, a snapshot in time—it is already somewhat dated because things are changing so fast.

Artists have now been selected for the Edmunds, Othello, Henderson, and will submit proposals for platform art by December 15th. We are working with three artists at Henderson in order to get a wide range of design options; then will choose one artist to go forward with. There are also two artists for the four station plazas, with proposals due January 8th. We are trying to stay in-sync with the Southeast stations schedule.

The "braid" is a system-wide artwork we are proposing as a sort of conversation between neighborhoods and stations. We are working with the ADA community to also have it serve as an accessible path for visually impaired people.

At the First Hill station, we are developing artwork inspired by the Steven Holl chapel at Seattle University. The themes are light, nature, healing, comfort, wisdom, and growth. We're using images of plants as well as actual plants, although this is still in flux since the architectural design could still change quite a bit. This state of flux does give us a chance to step back and ask ourselves whether we are pursuing the right ideas.

The last STart document set the tone for art to be more visible to the rider and community. This report focuses on this even more, with art as an identifier of place. Some of the system-wide ideas have fallen away for various reasons, but opportunities aren't lost—just need to be picked up at a higher level. Sound Transit, for example, may pick up the marker. Other elements have been taken to the point of closure. Both the OCS and the marker ideas are still in this document.

Panel Discussion

- The Panel talked early on about drawing in cultural elements from the adjacent neighborhoods—where is this connection in the latest proposals? For example, I expected to see more reference to the Burke Museum at the NE 45th station. *(At the tunnel stations, there are many choices for destinations—not just the Burke Museum. So we're trying to provide clues to all the choices.)*
- Yes, this might occur through signage too. Art can't carry the whole burden of wayfinding and contextual response, but it can lead the way.
- Describe the artist selection process, and also the distribution of funds. Is it by geographic areas? Evenly spread by sections isn't really fair either. *(We are apportioning equal dollars per stations, but looked at the MLK Corridor differently. So this gives the Corridor the same attention as tunnel and at-grade stations. The Corridor aggregate total ends up being more than the tunnel.)*
- As far as the rider's experience, is there any opportunity to work within the interior of the train? *(There may be some locations within the car itself and also as you are driving through spaces but not necessarily stopping. There will be no advertising in the car, but maybe using the whole ceiling for art work. The selection of artists will be done via the roster of 500+ artists. For MLK, we also drew from SAC and SESAC rosters. Then we created a short list of artists to go before the selection panel. Community input will come when the proposals are actually developed.)*
- Similar to a fleet of airplanes, they are all the same design, except for 2 or 3 which are different. It gives people a sense of the size of the fleet. Plus you get to opportunity to do something different with one of the trains.
- I like the braid idea in combination with providing facilities for the ADA community. At First Hill, I think you should use the medicinal plants idea in multiple ways—in “layers”—to engage people broadly.
- I think we see some success here, and I have a good idea of where you are headed.
- I like the focus on both place making and on the system—the two extremes—without feeling obligated to cover the whole spectrum of opportunities. Make sure the artwork works on many levels.
- I am hopeful that as we move into 60% design for all the stations that we will have an integrated art presentation with the architecture. That will enable us to get into the details of each proposal for each station, but the piece of course that is lost then is the big picture, the look of the whole system. So we need to review the documents that you presented and come back and talk to you about the plan, because that won't happen in a station to station review.

The discussion concluded with the Panel agreeing to review the report more closely and get back to the STart team with additional comments. It was noted that the Panel would be seeing individual art proposals along with station design presentations, but not necessarily getting another system-wide briefing unless we specifically schedule something. There was no action taken on the 38.5% report.

Update on Lander and Royal Brougham Stations

Greg Hill, Streeter and Associates

Debora Ashland introduced the topic by stating that Greg Hill is here to address comments and questions raised by the Panel at the September 6th briefing on these two stations. She added that they also have a plan of the aerial guideway to show the Panel this afternoon. Greg Hill then proceeded to go over key aspects of the design, as summarized below:

- Visibility of the stations is an issue in this area. We are trying to create a unified identity, drawing on the theme of a metamorphosis of raw to finished materials.
- We're using "cowl wall" canopies—only two places in the system where it is being used.
- The landscaping along the urban bike trail will create a continuous green band and serve as a marker for the stations.
- There will also be a colonnade of lights to connect each station with the nearest intersection, and an archway at Lander as a key entry element to help people find their way amid the other competing visual elements.
- The covered bicycle storage area will be an understated design so as not to compete with the other forms.
- Each platform includes an area we're calling the "turtleneck" where a person can gather him/herself after purchasing a ticket. The design includes 30% canopy coverage at each platform.
- Out at the intersection we had initially designed poles on both sides of the street with gate arms but Metro had this notion that they may want to change buses in all directions, although they don't normally do that. SEATRAN said if they are going to do that they will have to meet the highway standards for going past and staying in the lane, so all of our medians have disappeared. Because the medians are not there to put the signals on, then you get these giant trusses. There is a lot of visual competition, but we feel that the entrance arch is a good element to announce the fact that there is a station here.
- There will be three fences—between the tracks, a comfort fence to lean against when on the platform, and a track fence down the edge of the track.
- The colonnade of lights will be textured and penetrated by blue Plexiglas to create different effects with light. We're proposing a metal halide fixture.
- The artists are considering a moiré effect with screening that would go around the systems structures and bike parking.
- We may be able to push the property east by 5 feet in order to provide more space to set benches into the landscape. The benches are seen as artwork opportunities.
- The urban trail combines the cyclists and pedestrians at the Lander station. Part of the dilemma is what the surface treatment should be—same as other pedestrian areas or same as bike path?

Greg Hill provided the following update of the Royal Brougham station:

- The pedestrian ramp/walk aspect of the State Route 519 project has been taken out of the project, but the run to the platform is still good to keep as a queuing area. We're proposing a segmented railing up the ramp to help people queue up.
- We've moved ticket vending to a more prominent area.
- This station has a more traditional roof structure with a more interesting roof structure and sense of arrival.
- We're ignoring the concrete freeway column right now that sits in the middle of our plaza.
- OCS is being projected from the platform columns vs. separate columns.

Panel Discussion re: Lander

- Is the solution to show cyclists where they should be riding? Are you proposing to use the 5" for bikes?
- You need several signals to slow down cyclists.
- If the station is sited at the intersection, the bikes would slow down there anyway. I worry that we're setting up another situation to discourage use of the station.
- There is a passageway here that could make the pleasant, but there is inherent conflict. How many cyclists are just passing through and how many have this as a destination? (Most people are coming by bus.)
- My concern is cyclists passing through. Where are they going?
- I agree with Jack. The transit rider is being sacrificed for bus mobility. *(But the station is where it is. What is your preference for the bike trail/ped path?)*
- Make the asphalt narrower and the concrete wider.
- But the reality is that there isn't enough space to do both here.
- Physically separate the pedestrian and bike uses by the bike parking.
- Accidents are waiting to happen here.
- The pedestrian path needs to widen and become "richer" in design. Why are you putting benches there?
- No one waiting for a train will use those benches—they will go to the platform itself. *(There is a possibility for a double-loaded platform in the future, so we've tried to create an option for it. The trees are proposed to be trimmed up, columnar trees.)*
- We talked earlier about the "green lung" concept where the light rail line becomes an opportunity to provide a thread of green landscaping. Why are there no trees on the other side of the platform?
- Yes, we are still pushing for trees!
- This is a good place for larger trees. I also like the light fixtures.
- Rather than a literal representation of different wheels on the fence, think of things that transport the eye instead. Link the signal building with the rest of the design. Create a moiré effect.
- The wheel shapes on the fences remind me of hexes and barn fences!
- The crosswalk looks like it turns people away from the direction they want to travel in—true? *(This is a safety issue in that the bus and train will be signaled separately and we don't want someone to cross unsafely).*
- Is there a drawing of the view from Lander?
- I like the refinement of lights and platform design. How does the metamorphosis idea work?
- We need large-scale elements to compete with a context of this great scale. It is a hard environment.
- The lower ½ of the column should be treated in all 360 degrees at the base with a view all around it. Will there be light at the base?
- The Panel likes the lights, but with more refinement at the pedestrian level.
- I look forward to seeing more details.
- The colors are dull!
- Ask to see a study of colors.

Panel Discussion re: Royal Brougham

- This is a no man's land down here—the ticket booth is housed in a very straightforward shape, can you play with the shape of housing so that it has more interesting angles? *(That is possible, we are creating that housing.)*

- The design has a cartoonish quality to it, which I like. *(We are proposing trees and artwork at the station terminus. We have additional screening from the signal con buildings, we would like to put some art work here at some point, a big enormous piece.)*
- We would like Lida's piece, the SoDo artwork, located here. It is called the Urban Rest Stop. What about your feedback on intersections and crossings? *(It is interesting how various agencies are planning for the future. The buses "might" someday want to make a turn that they have never made to date, and probably will never make, but because they may want to eventually make a turn there, Seatran in turn requires a certain intersection configuration and dimension. At Holgate, because Seatran might someday want to utilize the r-o-w and open the street there, they are disinclined to allow the artwork to be sited there.)*
- We (SAC) had a similar situation with a project on Eastlake and we managed to prevail. Seatran was concerned the artwork might create traffic accidents, but none have occurred. *(Our feeling is at Holgate, the design would announce the southern entrance and it provides another type of visual interest in that corridor that you pass on the trains.)*
- I like having more tilt to the columns, and I like the space between the columns. Play with the box for fare-vending too.
- I also like the station, in spite of having not seen the earlier version.

Action

While the Panel generally approved of the design as presented, given the number of issues yet to resolve regarding pedestrian circulation, artwork, and street crossings, it was decided that these issues would be brought back to the Panel at the next meeting for further discussion. No further action was taken.

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 PM.